

POLITICAL DYNAMISM
IN
THE POETRY THEMES OF
HAKI R. MADHUBUTI (DON L. LEE)

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CHAPTER I

APPROACHING HAKI R. MADHUBUTI

For centuries artists and critics have not been able to decide whether art should or should not have a political function. Some critics have argued that art has no function and that it exists for its own sake; while others have argued that nothing exists for its own sake; everything exists for the sake of man. Many artists who have sought to attach a political or moral meaning to their art have been labeled with such epithets as "propagandist." Those who did the labeling made sure also that the term propaganda connotated something negative in the context of art. On the other side there were critics who asserted that all art is propaganda and that propaganda is a perfectly legitimate function for art. Among those critics was the outstanding black scholar of the early and middle twentieth century, W.E.B. DuBoise who wrote:

. . . all art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists . . . whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda.¹

This straightforward declaration was to be followed by four decades of black political poetry. Among these poets is the black nationalist, Haki R. Madhubuti (Don L. Lee). The primary intent of this study is to examine and discuss the political nature of themes in the poetry of Haki

¹"Criteria of Negro Art," Crisis, XXXII, No. 6, (October, 1926), pp. 290-97.

R. Madhubuti. We have also attempted to discover what the poet's political beliefs are and to measure the extent to which his political beliefs are reflected in his poetry.

Haki R. Madhubuti is the leading poet to emerge from the Black Arts Movement of the early and middle sixties. That is to say his poetry best reflects the aesthetic changes taking place at a time when Afro-American poetry becomes essentially different from Euro-American poetry in both form and content. These essential differences will be discussed in detail. For this study, the main sources of information are his eight books: Think Black, Black Pride, Don't Cry, Scream, We Walk the Way of the New World, Dynamite Voices, Direction Score, Plan to Planet, and Book of Life. We also use a taped interview of the poet in Chicago on July 27, 1974, as well as a quantity of secondary information, books, and periodicals.

In this study, the chapters, excepting the first, divide according to themes. These thematic divisions are topical and not historical. They are as follows: (2) Black Woman, (3) New Black Myths and Heroes, (4) Prophet and Priest, and (5) Pan Africa. We use comparison and contrast in explication to aid in the understanding of the thematic meanings. We use this method of investigation on the assumption that political intent informs the poetry of Haki R. Madhubuti. We treat form only when it informs the theme.

Theme is defined as the main idea, emotion, or spirit of a given poem. The idea is the message the author is trying to communicate. Emotion is the response that the idea invokes in the reader. Spirit is the reader's ability to derive a meaning from a given poem by merely being familiar with the source from which a particular poem emerged.

The term political or politic refers to art having a practical or useful function within a given community. In other words, art that politicizes, socializes, indoctrinates. Haki believes that the political function of the art should be in accord with the needs of the community. He also sees the black community in need of a Black nationalist consciousness. Therefore, the intent of his poetry is to shape and mold a Black nationalist consciousness.

From its earliest beginnings, Black American poetry has always been political. The poetry of Phyllis Wheatley, although void of race consciousness, was still political. Her poetry was political because it was created by a black person in a time when blacks were prohibited from reading or writing. Though she would have to be considered a minor American poet today, the quality of her work was of such a level that of itself it posed a contradiction to those who believed that black people were inferior.

If Phyllis Wheatley's poetry leaves doubt in one's minds, certainly George Horton's poetry does not. The title of his first book of verse, *Poems by a Slave*, implies a political contradiction. Horton as a slave was never spiritually defeated; in his poetry:

Is it because my skin is black,
That thou should'st be so dull and slack
and scorn to set me free?
Then let me hasten to the grave . . .²

When a slave reached the point where he no longer feared death or restraint, he was politically dangerous. The larger political function

²George Horton, "Slavery," in *Afro-American Writing*, ed. Richard A. Long and Eugenia W. Collier (New York: New York University Press, 1972) No. 1, p. 45.

of Horton's poetry was one of raising funds to buy his freedom. History tells us he never raised enough.

Following George Horton were a number of other black poets whose works were political. This succession began with Frances Harper and continued to the writers of the Harlem Renaissance.

The poetry of the Harlem Renaissance was political in that it reflected a high degree of race consciousness in its attempts to glorify and celebrate the black folk. The work of Sterling A. Brown and Langston Hughes reflected the way black folk actually spoke discounting the earlier stilted dialect of Paul Laurence Dunbar's poetry. This reflection of folk speech in their poetry influenced many writers of the sixties, including Haki himself. Jean Toomer, another important Harlem Renaissance writer, also influenced the writers of the Black Arts Movement, with his musical, lyrical poetry.

There were other major black poets, among them Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, and Gwendolyn Brooks who contributed to race consciousness, but it was not until the sixties with its rediscovery of Africa that race pride became relevant to the rest of the black world again.

Imamu Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) was the main spokesman for the Black Arts Movement beginning in the early sixties. He and the other artists of this group believed that all art should serve a political function; that black art was art written by black people, for black people and about black people; that the goal of black art should be to build a Black National consciousness. Much of the art in the early sixties was devoted to tearing down white standards, smashing white myths, and destroying white images. By the middle of the sixties, the artists had shifted from destroying whiteness to the building of a Black National

consciousness. They did this by constructing new black myths and creating positive black images.

Baraka's poem, "Black Art," effectively outlines the political function of black art. With vivid imagery and concrete metaphors, the poet captured the trend of the black movement of which he was an integral part. This poem begins with an accusation, an attack on everything and everybody who is believed to be a negative influence on the black community:

We want poems like fist beating niggers out of jocks
or dagger poems in the slimy bellies
of the owner-jews. Black poems to
smear on girdle mamma mulatto bitches . . .
We want "poems that kill"³

He then enumerates the function of Black Art and concludes with a venerated black people having their past linked with their future. This important linking was part of an over all nation building process to solidify and to form the basis around which a Black National consciousness would be built. Baraka writes:

. . . Let Black People understand
that they are the lovers and the sons . . .
of lovers and warriors and sons . . .
We want a black poem. And a
Black World (Black Magic Poetry, 117)

From this setting Haki R. Madhubuti emerged. Like his predecessors, his poetry was political and deeply rooted in black folk expression.

Haki R. Madhubuti was born in 1942 in Little Rock, Arkansas, and reared in the slums of Detroit, Michigan. When he was sixteen, his mother passed away at the early age of thirty-five. Later he recorded

³LeRoi Jones, Black Magic Poetry (Indianapolis: Bobbs—Merrill Company, 1969), p. 116.

this event in the poem, "Black Sketches,": "In 1959 my mom was dead at the age of thirty-five and nobody thought it unusual; not even me."⁴

Haki's Black Woman poetry shows a deep respect for black mothers.

Following the death of his mother, he moved to Chicago, Illinois where he stayed with an aunt.

Following Haki's graduation from high school, he went into the army. There, he tells us, he gained insights into American society. He wrote, "I really peeped the white boys in the army."⁵ He served a total of two years and two months before he was released for "being a security risk."

After Haki left the army, he attended Chicago City College and then Roosevelt University. He majored in American Literature. However, Haki does not attach much significance to his academic background. He remarks, "Man, I just barely made it out of high school."⁶ It became evident when talking with Haki that he sees his black experience as his greatest learning experience.

Today, Haki is the publisher and editor of Third World Press; he also teaches several courses at Howard University. One, in the Institute of the Arts and Humanities, is called "World View Toward a New Consciousness." The second is a writers' workshop.

⁴Don L. Lee, Don't Cry, Scream (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1969), p. 52. It is also important to note at this time, Haki's use of lower case lettering. We quote all passages in this study as he writes them. It is important that we do this, because he is ignoring and reacting to the rigidity of the larger society; a case where form, informs content.

⁵"The World of Don L. Lee" (Interview), The Black Collegian No. 11, 26, (Feb.-Mar., 1972.)

⁶Taped Interview with Haki R. Madhubuti, Chicago, July 27, 1974.

The poet also directs the institute of Positive Education. This is the parent organization of the following agencies: Third World Press, Hieroglyphic Ink, a typesetting agency; Ujamaa Co-opt, a food buying cooperative; a credit union, a farm, used for a children's camp and farming; and New Concept School, an independent school for elementary age black children. The organization receives no local, state or federal funds and is one of the few black Nationalist organizations in this country whose members are free to devote their full-time working toward Black Nationalism.

Don L. Lee took on his Swahili name after he had emerged as a major black poet. The Book of Life, the first book published under his Swahili name, was published in November of 1973. The poet delayed the changing of his name until the Institute of Positive Education was able to purchase various property sites. Haki means just or justice. The R means awakening, and Madhubuti means strong, dependable, and self-reliant. Most of the members of his organization refer to him as Mwalimu, meaning teacher. The poet's change of name is basic to his Black Nationalist belief. He writes, "your name tells us who you are, where you come from, where you are going, how you may get there."⁷

Haki's poetry has historically progressed, meaning it has improved in form and content as Haki matured and developed as a black man. He states that most of his early poetry was poor. In his first book, Think Black, much of the poetry was autobiographical and bogged down with the rhetoric of the militants of the Black Power Movement. This work failed

⁷Don L. Lee, Book of Life (Detroit: Broadside Presss, 1973), p. 80.

as poetry because of its heavy reliance upon cliches. While his earliest writings were basically poor, some, nonetheless, showed promise in style, especially in their ability to reflect the speech of the urban black folk. This can be seen best in three poems from the above book: "A Poem for Black Woman," "Wake-Up Niggers," and "In a Period of Growth."

Haki's second book, Black Pride, showed a growth in his consciousness as an individual; it also showed progress in style and form. The poet was using wit and irony better for literary effect. The poems were becoming less personal and more political. The poet's vision at this time broadened and took on a group significance; yet, the works were still often too long and wordy and heaped with cliches. But the third and fourth books, Don't Cry, Scream, and We Walk The Way Of The New World, were the actual turning points in terms of Haki's development as a poet. Here his style of reflecting folk speech and folkways in his poetry improved. Most of the poems in these two books are rhythmic and highly spiritual. Haki began to create new concepts such as the "New World" and showed skill in combining words like "realpeople", "blackwoman," and "realenemy." The wit and irony in these poems sharpened and his approach was definitely positive. The poem, "Don't Cry, Scream," besides reflecting the folk speech, was also Haki's first attempt at creating new myths. The majority of the poems to follow moved toward this creation and construction of new black myths containing black heroes and images. Now his audience broadened and included not only American blacks, but also black people throughout the globe.

His latest poems show his greatest accomplishments as a poet in the "Positive Movement Will Be Difficult but Necessary" and "Afrikan Men." (Both are explicated in detail in the chapters to follow). Their

success resides in their remaining conspicuously free from cliches, their spiritual insight, and their great simplicity. Though these poems are simplistic in theme, they are broad in terms of a black world view.

Haki's greatest success as a poet resides then in his ability to affirm black culture by reflecting and celebrating it and by illuminating and transforming it in the creation of new black myths. While his poetry is didactic, political, and grounded in reality, it still attempts to soar to cosmic heights. As it soars, it appeals not only to the black man's immediate concern, but also to his ultimate concerns as well. Its aesthetic ability to soar, yet still remain extremely sensitive to social and political reality can be attributed to the true genius of the artist himself. We will now take a closer look at the four thematic divisions in terms of the myths they sought to project and their larger political functions.

CHAPTER II

BLACK WOMAN

The black woman as a theme in the poetry of Haki R. Madhubuti is political because the bases upon which the black woman is venerated are racial. The racial veneration heightens an already existing race differentia and supports Haki's Black Nationalist ideology which asserts race to be a fundamental contradiction in the American Capitalist society. Those who assert race as the fundamental contradiction opposing black liberation today are actually saying that blacks are oppressed, exploited and discriminated against primarily because of the color of their skins; that white people as a race benefit collectively because of racial discrimination. If that assumption is correct, then race becomes the all important factor in determining black survival. That is to say, that the survival of black people as human beings is synonymous with their survival as a black race of people. This is the position most black nationalist take. It is in this context that the veneration of the black woman and her relationship to herself and to her man is to be understood in this chapter.

The black woman in Haki's poetry is often depicted as the reflection of the new black nation that is to emerge. She reflects the intelligence of the nation. Intelligence, here, means the ability to comprehend the authentic nature of one's predicament and make generalized responses as to ways one can move from disadvantaged predicaments to more advantaged ones. Haki feels that intelligence is also the ability to

transfer the values, morals, and priorities of the nation to its offspring. He wrote in the Book of Life, "the intelligence of a nation is reflected in its women . . . with the early education of the nation." (Book of Life, p. 53)

The black woman also reflects the revolutionary consciousness of the nation. This consciousness is that thorough awareness by an individual of her relationship to her oppressor. Haki's themes indicate that there are internal oppressors, such as one's fallen value system; external oppressors, such as institutionalized racism; concrete internal oppressors, such as a severe chronic alcoholism; a concrete external oppressor, such as the president of the Ku Klux Klan. These various levels of oppression will be discussed later in the study.

Revolutionary consciousness implies a correct analysis of fundamental issues in regard to freedom, liberation, and oppression; knowing who the enemy is. According to Haki, revolutionary consciousness is the acceptance of Black Nationalism as a viable means of achieving black liberation. Thus, it is a political necessity that the woman reflect the revolutionary consciousness of Black Nationalism. In his poetry this manifests itself in two ways: (1) The way the black woman is portrayed relating to herself; (2) The way the black woman is portrayed relating to her man. These must symbolize the basic relationships founding a reality upon which a meaningful nationalism can exist.

The themes that show the black woman relating to self are numerous. Because the theme is symbolic of what the black race ought to be doing, the subject's introspective soul searching symbolizes the attempt of a race of people to find and discover self. When there is an attack on the value system of a black woman (where it differs from a Black Nationalist value system), that attack is upon the entire race.

One such attack is on the contradiction of "talking black and sleeping white." The authentic issue at stake in the attack upon that contradiction is the need for a person's words to be legitimized by their actions. It is a criticism of the hypocrisy that will erode the potential of any political ideology. Haki wrote this about a poet in his book of literary criticism, Dynamite Voices: "Nommo becomes its own meaning: the word, the power of the word, communication." That is to say that if there is a consistency in word and deed, then the two become one.

The poem, "A Poem For Black Women," attacks the contradiction between word and deed:

i mean
i
thought she was
"blackman ain't shit"
she would say
&
the words would
cut thru me
like rat
teeth⁸

In the biting effect of the woman's words and the sharpness of the rat's teeth, the reader gains some insight into the power of the word. However, this power is softened, if not altogether lost because of the contradictory nature of her deed, that is "talking black" but not living black:

. . . thos words:
"blackmen ain't shit,"
& holding that whi
te boy's
hand (Think Black, p. 10)

Haki in pointing out that contradiction is challenging the black woman

⁸Don L. Lee, Think Black, (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1969) p. 10.

to deal critically with self. The challenge for her to deal with self is a challenge for all black people to deal with "self."

Another way Haki challenges the black woman to deal with herself is by criticizing a well known personality in the black community. The poem, "On Seeing Diana Go Maaaaaaad," is a criticism of Diana Ross. The singer becomes a symbol. Representing others as well as herself, she symbolizes the assimilationist's values and the opportunism accompanying such values. These are detrimental, according to Haki, because they contradict Black Nationalist values. The poet also feels that white people have historically shown their unwillingness to allow blacks to assimilate; therefore, any attempt by blacks to assimilate would be a denial of what history teaches.

This poem establishes a link between her aspirations and the aspirations of the middle class or Bourgeois American. By portraying her as a "dog lover," he simultaneously establishes dog loving as a bourgeois value. Haki writes, ". . . in a land where poodles eat/live cleaner than their masters."⁹ This line not only establishes dog loving as a bourgeois value but also attaches a dehumanizing connotation to it. This play upon the meaning of the word dog, on one level literally the pet or animal and on another level a characteristic of the behavior of white people toward non-white people, is an attempt to indict Diana Ross for participating in the destruction of her own people. The poem concludes with the persona restating Diana Ross's refusal to accept a black value system, and with sharp, cutting diction and concrete imagery

⁹Don L. Lee, "On Seeing Diana Go Maaaaaaad," in We Walk The Way Of The New World, (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1970), p. 37.

admonishing Diana for joining the "hippy generation:"

u, the gifted voice, a symphony, have now joined the
hippy generation to become unhipped,
to become the symbol of a new aberration
the wearer of other people's hair
to become one of the real animals of this earth

In criticizing Diana Ross, Haki criticizes all the black women who she symbolizes. For the ones who wear false eyelashes, he wrote, "she cried her eyelashes off." For the ones who desire white men, he writes that she teaches white men to dance the monkey, "the only dance she performs with authority." For the ones who wear wigs, he writes that they are "the wearers of other people's hair." For the ones who are motivated by their ego he writes, ". . . u will travel north by northwest deeper into the ugliness of yr/bent ego."¹⁰ In attacking these values, Haki points out their detrimental effect in terms of black people's political power.

A more positive poem revealing some aspect of the black woman relating to herself is "blackwoman." Representative of those that attempt to communicate a "black woman moving" theme, the poem's movement is sometimes a mental one and at other times a physical one, but it always is meant to reflect the movement of the nation. Therefore, her movement symbolizes a nation of black people moving toward self-determination--". . . will define herself, naturally, will talk/walk/live."¹¹

Whereas, the movement of the black woman in "blackwoman" is mental, the poem, "Judy-One," exemplifies the physical movement of the black

¹⁰Ibid., p. 38 (All quotes in paragraphs came from same source and page).

¹¹Don L. Lee, Don't Cry, Scream, p. 54.

woman. The poet writes, ". . . moves like sea-water--always going somewhere strongly."¹² The implication here is that the black woman is as certain about the direction in which she will venture as the flow of sea water and she goes there--"strongly." The need of the black woman to be moving and productive is supported in a set of "rules to live by" from his latest book, the Book of Life. He writes, "women . . . move throughout the nation being productive/if the women have nothing to do it reflects what the nation is not doing."¹³

The work and productivity of the nation is basic to the nation's growth and development; therefore, a great majority of Haki's black women poems show them working, moving, and producing. His aim is to communicate that if black people's work habits, based upon their work for other people, could be redirected in such a way that they were working for themselves, large measures of progress could be achieved toward their ultimate freedom. He is aware that black people must work in order to earn their livelihood and he is also aware that most Black Nationalist organizations do not produce concrete goods and services for their members. In spite of that reality which is grounded in historical and sociological reasoning, he is convinced that the only job that is mandatory is working for the race. The first step toward working for the race is for the black man and the black woman to discover who they are as individuals; then they should come together and find out who they are in terms of a black family.

Haki's poems dealing specifically with the black man and black woman together usually fall roughly into two types: (1) the type where a confrontation is inevitable because of some insensitivity on the part of

¹²Don L. Lee, We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 27.

¹³Haki R. Madhubuti, Book of Life, p. 38.

"the man;" (2) the type where they have worked through their insensitivities and are able to relate to each other as true lovers. The confrontations in poems of the first type often center around the black man's refusal to see the black woman as a complete human being, but rather as a sexual object. This way of viewing the black woman is contrary to the goals of Black Nationalism and, according to Haki's poetry, it supports a male-chauvinistic view of women. Therefore, when the black man refuses to look at the black woman only as a sexual object, he is also rejecting the values of the Western world. The rejection of western values is a must before blacks can accept a black value system. An example of Haki treating this theme comes from the poem, "Revolutionary Screw:"

i know,
 the sisters just don't
 understand the
 pressure u is under
 &
 when u ask for a piece
 of leg/
 it's not for yr/self
 but for
 yr/people--it keeps u going
 & anyway u is a revolutionary (Don't Cry, Scream,
 p. 58)

The black mental revolution in the sixties was supposed to alter, radically, the total nature of the black man. That mental alteration is what Haki refers to as a "revolutionary consciousness." Later, he wrote in the Book of Life that many Blacks were dishonest about their commitment to blackness and have used the race for their own good. He refers to them as the "hanger-ons and the pimps of the race."¹⁴ The poem, "Revolutionary

¹⁴ Don L. Lee, "Introduction," in Book of Life, p. 9.

Screw," portrays the black woman consciously reflecting a revolutionary consciousness while the black man is portrayed as a hypocrite:

that sister dug it
from the beginning
had an early eye
i mean
she really had it together
when she said:
go fuck yr/self nigger (Don't Cry, Scream, p. 58)

On the other hand, the poem, "Reflection On A Lost Love," attacks the black man's sexual preoccupation and at the same time ridicules his lack of discretion with reference to those with whom he becomes sexually involved. Haki accomplishes this by making the black man a victim of a homosexual. The homosexual is depicted as a female impersonator. The black man, with a strong sexual drive, rushes into the situation only to find at the end that his newly discovered love is a man. Haki writes:

i just stood=
& looked with utter amazement as she said:
in a deep
man like
voice
"hi baby - my name is
joe sam."
(Don't Cry, Scream, p. 62)

This poem attacks the sexist attitudes of the black man as well as the homosexuality in the black community. Haki stated on a recorded album, "we can not build a nation with men loving men and women loving women."¹⁵ This statement was another way of conveying that we must love all black people, and that we must also build strong black heterosexual relationships.

¹⁵Don L. Lee, "Rappin and Reading: Broadside Voices, " (Record Album 1970).

Strong black heterosexual relations should result in strong black families and strong families should lead to strong black nations.

Besides the anti-homosexual and anti-sexist sub-themes of the black woman themes, there is another sub-theme in which Haki attacks the black man and that is the "black man leaving" theme. This sub-theme usually explores the loneliness and hurt caused by the man's absence. The poem, "After Her Man had left her for the Sixth time that year," portrays, with the use of visual images, the emotional impact on the black woman. Haki writes, "awkwardly, she stood nakedly, nakedly, against the window's cool," which is a description of the awkwardness one feels when one's emotions have been shattered. The visual images convey to the reader the hurt. The tactile image like "the windows cool" appears to be the reader's feelings. The poet feels that the hurt caused by the black man will have to be eliminated before black unity becomes a reality. This poem ends with the black woman committing suicide by jumping out of the window. He writes, "she stood nakedly . . . against the window's cool then joined it."¹⁶ The unspoken implies that her act is not to be dwelt upon at length because suicide is an improper response for black conflicts. Black Nationalism, according to Haki, must eliminate or minimize hurt and conflict both--internal and externally. Thus, when Haki attacks separation and splits in black families, he is attacking black people's misuse of their most effective political weapon available--black unity.

"Blackgirl Learning" discusses another black woman who is left by her black man. The noticeable difference in the two poems is the woman's response to the absence of their men. "After her Man had left her for

¹⁶Don L. Lee, We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 16. (All poems in paragraph came from same page and source).

the Sixth time that year" shows the woman destroyed by the situation. On the other hand, the woman in "Blackgirl Learning" uses her time alone to read and to write poetry, and refuses to let her man's absence destroy her. Haki wrote, "gwendolyn brooks and margaret walker lined her dresser" and "she showed me her own poetry far beyond love verse . . . " The poem is ironic because the black woman has not discovered the backward nature of her man who is said to be out "learning to walk straight." Her naviety is shown in her wishful statement, "her man worshipped her," yet he was not home with her. The persona in the poem hastens to point out the contradiction in her statement by saying, "He wasn't there/she told me that he had other things to do . . . "¹⁷ The implication is that if her man could only learn to "walk straight," perhaps he would come home and learn how to be black.

Part of the goal of any liberating ideology should be the praise and affirmation of those positive qualities already preasent in the society for whom the ideology is mean to liberate. Haki does this in his black woman themes; as well as criticize the negative aspects of black culture. While it is generally true that the black man has been influenced by the sexism present in the larger society and that it is an historical fact that a large number of black men did separate from their black women for various reasons, it can also be said that all black men did not have sexist feelings and attitudes toward their women and all black men did not leave their black women alone. Haki wrote, "The family structure has endured since recorded history. The family structure will

¹⁷Don L. Lee, "Blackgirl Learning," in We Walk The Way of The New World, p. 35. (all poems in the paragraph came from same page and source).

continue to survive the sickness."¹⁸ There is much, therefore, to be written about the positive aspect of black relationships.

Part of that which is positive in black relationships has been the way in which the black man has perceived the black woman's beauty. In Haki's poetry, she is often depicted as being something very special. He writes in the Book of Life, "There is much special about black women, the way they endure, the way they grow, the way they build, the way they love." Most of the qualities are internal and it is these that Haki most often emphasizes, because Black Nationalism is concerned about the total spiritual and physical transformation of the person. This is why Amiri Baraka and other Black Nationalists insist upon the creation of a Black value system that will aid in transforming the total person. Baraka, who had a tremendous effect upon Haki's poetry and consciousness, wrote in the Black Scholar:

We also believe that no ideas or ideology will really make the change we seek unless they are based on a Black Value System . . . Their values is that they focus on specific moral qualities
black people need to liberate ourselves.¹⁹

It is the black women's inner beauty which is singled out most often by Haki. He called her precious life--"I realize that it was . . . Life and it sparkled, sparkled, sparkled like a Jewelsparkled."²⁰ The veneration of the black woman by the black man is a form of image reversal. The

¹⁸Don L. Lee, Book of Life, p. 52.

¹⁹Imamu Amiri Baraka, "Black Nationalism: 1972," The Black Scholar 4 (Sept. 1972) :24.

²⁰Don L. Lee, "On The Discovery of Beautiful Black Woman," in Black Pride (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1968) p. 15.

reversion of the image aids toward the creation of a black aesthetic and aids toward legitimizing blackness; that function alone is an important one.

In a society where beauty is programmed as blue eyes and blond hair, it is increasingly difficult for a young black female child to grow up feeling secure about her beauty as a woman in that society. The prevalent white perceptions of beauty often forces young black female girls to bleach and straighten their hair with hot combs or simply to purchase blond wigs of various white styles. In a recording the poet speaks of the need for blacks to project positive images of themselves: "It's so bad to see a nine-year-old sister walking around here with her hair burned out--trying to be like somebody else."²¹ When he reverses images, he usually takes an image that is literally black and defines it as a thing of beauty. For example in the poem, "Man Thinking About Woman," he describes the black woman's beauty--"un-noticed by regular eye is like a blackbird resting on a telephone wire . . ."²² The beauty of the woman is compared to a "blackbird," a bird not often cited for its beauty. In making the blackbird beautiful because of its blackness, Haki established a criteria and basis by which the black woman's beauty can be judged.

The technique of reversing images is one of making everything black good, beautiful, and positive. In "Marlayne," the black woman's beauty is compared to the beauty of a "harlem night upon the world." She was

²¹Don L. Lee, "Rappin and Reading: Broadside Voices," (Record Album, 1970).

²²Don L. Lee, We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 29.

also metaphorically said to be Algerian sand . . . "women there are drops of Algerian sand."²³ The comparison of the woman's beauty with Algerian sand helps legitimize Africa and supports the Pan-African position which has as its premise that the entirety of Africa is one nation. (Pan-American themes will be discussed later in this study). The black woman's beauty compared with the night of Harlem helps to legitimize the blackness that Harlem connotes. Harlem has become a symbol in Afro-American literature; it symbolizes black folk genius. The ability of black folk to have survived inhumane living conditions, such as overly crowded living conditions, dilapidated, rat-infested housing, noise and air pollution, and rampant crime, indicates geniuses solely on their ability to survive.

Harlem blacks have also made tremendous cultural contributions to the larger Afro-American culture. When speaking of cultural contributions, we are not merely indicating the contributions of the Harlem Renaissance, but also the work of an endless list of talented black artists in every aesthetic field. To compare the black woman with the Harlem night is to compare her with the greatest expression of black human survival and also with the greatest expression of black human creativity. That implied blackness is what makes her special: "If she's black, really black and a woman that's special, that's real special,"²⁴ wrote Haki.

Another positive aspect of the black heterosexual relationship is the intercourse. When the poet uses a sexual reference, it is usually used as a form of celebrating black love. "Man and Woman" describes

²³Ibid., p. 30.

²⁴Ibid., p. 39.

a couple about to engage in sexual intercourse. Initially, the poem appears to serve only the function of describing the foreplay which eventually leads into the act of physical sex; yet, a closer examination reveals a richness, an added dimension from his use of black folk language and black folk music.

This same poem also demonstrates authority in the use of mascon elements. Mascon elements are words and constructions that carry an inordinate charge of emotional and psychological weight. Stephen Henderson, writes about mascon elements:

... whenever they are used they set all
kinds of bells ringing, all kinds of
synapsed
snapping, on all kinds of levels . . . These
words of course, are used in complex associa-
tions, and thus form meaningful wholes in
ways which defy understanding by outsiders
...²⁵

Haki's use of mascon elements, black folk vernaculars, and black folk music legitimize blackness and establish a base around which a black nation can emerge. An example of the way the mascon element is effectively used in "Man and Woman" is "u throw yr/left leg over my left leg and get dangerous with yr/left hand."²⁶ The mascon resides in the word "Dangerous." This word in black culture is often used to describe the skillful way in which something is done, for example, "that brother has a dangerous jump shot," meaning he is accurate with his jump shot; or "Ali has a dangerous left jab," meaning Ali is skillful in the use

²⁵Stephen Henderson, Understanding the New Black Poetry (New York: William Morrow, 1972), p. 44.

²⁶Don L. Lee, We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 34.

his left jab. The word "dangerous" in the context in which Haki is using it refers to the stimulating effect of the woman's hand. The black woman's ability to sexually arouse the black man challenges the white myth of the sensuality of the white woman and destroys the argument that the black man has to engage in sexual intercourse with a white woman in order to be sexually fulfilled. Haki was concerned about that argument posed by many blacks who called themselves revolutionaries; to them he wrote, "I met a part time revolutionalist too-day . . . talking black & sleeping white."²⁷ In using the mascon element, the poet is able to compress an entire cultural experience into a few words.

This brevity in diction, an effective literary style, is also reflective of the way black folk have been able to communicate, rather simply, the intricate nature of their culture to one another. Haki, in reflecting on the simplistic way in which black folk communicate various intricacies, is affirming the folk speech. An example of the way Haki's poetry reflects the black folk's use of brevity in the vernacular can also be seen in the poem "Man and Woman." The line, "listen to the record woman."²⁸ is a simple, indirect way by which the persona tells his woman of her effectiveness in managing to stimulate him. We will talk more about this style of writing later on in this study. Here the important point to be made about his usages of the black folk vernacular is that it is a form of praising the black folk culture, which legitimizes blackness and establishes a base from which a Black Nationalist ideology can emerge.

²⁷Don L. Lee, "Contradiction in Essence," Black Pride, p. 28.

²⁸Don L. Lee, We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 24.

Haki concludes "Man and Woman" with a reference to black music-- "'get back' is in rhythm with the shaking of the bed."²⁹ In "black-woman" he concludes also with black music as a literary reference--"love her . . . u don't need music . . . & she'll do more than dance."³⁰ This writer emphasizes that Haki's sexual references are forms of affirming black love; that his use of the black vernacular and black music are forms that legitimize the Afro-American culture. The affirmation of black love and the legitimization of black culture establish a foundation from which a Black Nationalist ideology can emerge.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Don L. Lee, Don't Cry, Scream, p. 54.

CHAPTER III

NEW BLACK MYTHS AND HEROES

This chapter concerns those individuals within the black community who Haki Madhubuti singles out most often as being worthy of praise. This veneration of black heroes from a literary standpoint evolves into the creation and establishment of a new black mythology. Many of the aestheticians preceeding Haki felt that a black literature could exist upon the construction of its own black symbols. Amiri Baraka, recognized by many black writers and black critics to be the father of the Black Arts Movement, said this about the blacks who attempted to write in the past: "He (the Afro-American) never moved into the position where he could propose his own symbols, erect his own personal myths, as any great literature must."³¹

The creation of new black myths and heroes has political significance as in Haki's image-reversal technique used in Black Woman themes. That is to say that myths and images play a large part in how blacks see themselves in a predominantly white society. Carolyn Fowler, generally respected as a black critic, has written:

image is a term which we are using more and more in the black community because we are discovering that the image we have of ourselves controls what we are capable of doing.³²

³¹Leroi Jones, "Myths of Negro Past," in Home (New York: William Morrow, 1966), p. 122.

³²Carolyn I. Gerald, "The Black Writer and His Role," in The Black Aesthetic, ed. Addison Gayle, Jr. (New York: Anchor, 1972), p. 349.

When the black writer creates new positive black myths and images, he challenges white mythologies that serve as justification for the larger Euro-American society's oppression and subjugation of its people of color. The larger political significance of the new black myths is that it gives black youth new positive images. These new images are usually based upon reality. This realistic frame of reference is emphasized because black myths, according to many black writers and critics, ought to be identifiable by the black people. Not only should they be readily identified, but also consistent with the life styles of the people; thus, when a people read their literature, they are also reading their history and heritage.

Haki is moving to erect new myths and create new black images. Haki's grandmother was the reference for the poem "Big Momma." Big Momma or the big momma image symbolizes all the black mothers who were able to transcend the discriminating and exploitative conditions of the past. Surviving such horrible conditions caused a fuller awareness of what living actually meant. Haki's veneration of the black mother stems from a genuine admiration for black mothers, in spite of the fact that his mother died and he was left alone to raise himself at the age of sixteen. He said, "After mother passed, I was on my own." He wrote later in the poem "Black Sketches":

In 1959
my mom
was dead at the
age of 35
& nobody thought it unusual;
not even
me

(Don't Cry, Scream, p. 52)

The poet's ability to write admirably about black mothers in spite of

the hardships of his youth is indicative of his belief that poetry should be a collective art, not a personal response.

Big Momma's wisdom receives considerable attention in "Big Momma:"

she's somewhat confused about all of this blackness
but said that it's good when negroes start putting
themselves first and added: we've always shopped at
the colored stores.³³

He ironically states that Big Momma is "confused," yet in terms of Black Nationalism, he has Big Momma making a statement that appears clear and vivid. The irony here points out the contradictions present in the larger society in regard to racial intelligence. According to Haki, the wisdom of the black mother may not be a wisdom that the Euro-American intelligensia would respect; nevertheless, the black mother's wisdom is in accord with what the Black Nationalist would consider wise because she understands the realities of Afro-American culture and society. She buys from "colored stores," and Black Nationalism emphasizes self-reliance; she tells her son, " . . . you is a man, a black man,"³⁴ because the black man must protect his woman, and Black Nationalism emphasizes self-defense.

The innate black wisdom of Black Momma is an integral part of the new myth. She receives her knowledge from being in meaningful contact with black people. Her superstitions and intuitive beliefs are often used as a source of knowledge and wisdom.

. . . but if you can think back
we never did eat too much pork
round here anyways, it was bad for the belly
i shared her smile and agreed

(We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 32)

³³Don L. Lee, We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 31.

³⁴Ibid.

The important point to be made about utilizing the intuition of "Big Momma" as a source of wisdom is that it runs against the core of the mainstream of what the Euro-American consider wise. Intuition is often considered by the Western world to be antirational. Believers in Western rationalism assume through the rational process of reason that a correct course of action can always be determined. "Big Momma" poses a contradiction to this assumption. Her source of knowledge is her ability to feel intuitively what is wrong and what is right, yet she should appear to be an "idiot" on a test administered by Western society. Haki wrote, (Big Momma) . . . was laugh at by some dumb, eye-less image maker as she scored idiot you i. q. test."³⁵

The fact that this dual interpretation exists concerning the content of Big Momma's intelligence supports the argument for African continuum asserting that black people are culturally different from white people. Big Momma, rooted in her folk experience, assumes all the knowledge of the modern revolutionists. She sees the contradictions present in the black community and can articulate them:

& the way niggers cut each other up round
here every weekend that whiteman don't
haveta
worry bout no revolution specially when he's
gonta haveta pay for it too, anyhow all he's
gonta do is drop a truck load of dope out.

("Big Momma," We Walk the Way
of the New World, p. 33)

Haki feels that Big Momma's wisdom is liberated--a necessary vision for the emergencies of a revolutionary black consciousness.

Her vision is a necessary liberating vision because it's rooted

³⁵Ibid.

in her interactions with her culture; that is, a culture that is immensely different from the culture of the larger Euro-American culture. "Big Momma" concludes with the persona realizing that what first appeared to him as confusion about "blackness" was in reality a vivid perception.

He wrote:

. . . i headed for 43rd st
at the corner i saw a brother crying while
trying to hold up a lamp post,
thru his watery eyes i cd see big momma's words

(We Walk the Way of the New World, p. 32.)

Other phrases, like "cleaning somebody elses house she remained home to clean the one she didn't own . . . " and "she was in a serious funny mood,"³⁶ help to support a larger irony that resides in that fact that the reality of poverty cannot break or destroy the black spirit in Big Momma. This strength of Big Momma enables her to transcend her reality and the transcendence moves her into a greater awareness of her past, present, and future; this, in turn gives her a personal strength:

at sixty-eight
she moves freely, is often right
and when there is food
eats joyously with her own
real teeth

(We Walk the Way of the New World, p. 32)

Big Momma's transcendence is a state of pseudo-liberation, through fantasy as all myths are; yet the fantasy is grounded in the reality of a woman having battled with destructive elements in her society and having conquered those elements. Her courage at this point ceases to be the courage of one individual within a community. When personified courage

³⁶Ibid., (all quotes in paragraph came from same page and source.)

reaches this proportion, it is no longer an admirable virtue, but a political weapon that can be used for revolutionary and political purposes.

Haki also venerates black writers. Most are well-known established black writers, namely, Gwendolyn Brooks, Hoyt Fuller, Lerone Bennette, Jr., Conrad Kent Rivers, and Langston Hughes. Some writers are praised for their integrity and wisdom, others for their beauty and understanding of "blackness." Conrad Kent River's death left an impression on the mind of Haki; he wrote:

but most
poets who poet
seldom
die
from
overexposure

(First Impressions on a Poety's Death,"
in Think Black, p. 17)

The veneration of the black writer is an attempt to create new black heroes and images. These writers are usually metaphoric symbols representing "blackness." Their personal qualities and attributes have a community significance.

Gwendolyn Brooks is depicted as a "total-real" person. In "Gwendolyn Brooks" Haki wrote:

a negro english instructor called her:
"a fine negro poet"
a white critic said:
"she's a credit to the negro race"
somebody else called her:
"a pure negro writer"

(Don't Cry, Scream, p. 22)

The poem concludes with this last line, "bro they been callin that sister by the wrong name." The understanding of the hero in a mythology is of utmost importance. The hero is an extension of one's self. In

honoring and understanding the hero, one supposedly honors and understands oneself. Gwendolyn Brooks is described in the poem as totally real, helpful, beautiful, ordinary, underfed, and small. These adjectives describe qualities, virtues, and values necessary for the building of a black nation. They describe more than moral qualities, because moral qualities are also political directions, economic attitudes, and necessary psychological states of mind.

Hoyt W. Fuller and Lerone Bennett, Jr. are depicted as mature, settled men. Their maturity and stability is singled out because much of the action by younger men lack a maturity; consequently, many harmful mistakes are made by younger, less mature men. Haki wrote in the poem "African Men":

there is a certain steel-ness about you
the way u set the vision & keep it
the way you view the world & warn us.
. . . the image the reflection the
realness of what is to be

(Book of Life, p. 26)

This stillness or "steelness" is a type of wisdom--a wisdom they have obtained from living a life without compromise. The poet writes in the same poem, "there is a certain stillness about your unwilling to be pushed by the opportunities of the world." The black writer's "stillness" and unwillingness to compromise is venerated because they are qualities needed by the Black Nationalist to build a Black Nation; therefore, the veneration legitimizes the qualities themselves and also legitimizes the claims and aspirations of the writers who possess these qualities.

It is also important to mention a comparison between the wisdom of the black scholar and the wisdom of "Big Momma." Both wisdoms stem

from their world view, a black world view. World view is a type of awareness of self based on one's relationship to the rest of the world. The "Black Momma" arrives at her awareness intuitively while the black scholars arrive at theirs through scholarship. The two references jointly account for total awareness. The synthesis of the two points of reference establishes a new criteria for black awareness and poses a threat and contradiction to Western rationalism that assumes the only way to derive knowledge is through the rational process of reason.

The black musicians are another group worthy of veneration by the black community. They, like the other black heroes, are extensions of their culture. That basis makes their veneration political because it legitimizes a culture that white social scientists have tried to explain out of existence. The black musician's music reflects a culture that social scientists have tried to say does not exist. The double irony resides in the fact that the larger Euro-American culture has always copied and co-opted black musical forms as fast as they were invented. Haki wrote:

what is even worse is that our music is
being stolen each and every day and passed off as
another's creation--take Tom Jones and Janis Joplin,
two white performers who try to sing black . . .
It will get to the point where you speak of soul
and black music, you will find people automatically
thinking of white imitators.³⁷

The theme of white's co-opting Black Music, or the fear of it, exists usually in the context of an over-all attempt by the author to affirm black music, "blackmusic/a beginning" is the best example of this

³⁷Don L. Lee, "Introduction," We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 19.

type of poem. It tells of Pharaoh Sanders whose performance was of such a quality that it intimidated a white group of performers who were supposed to follow him. The white group, "dressed in African garb and dark sun glasses," were dressed in order to conceal their true identity and also to appear as black spectators. The group was stealing the form and style of Pharaoh Sanders and blacks were not aware of what was happening "until their (the white group's) next recording had been released; the beach boys play soul music."³⁸ An article by Albert Goldman entitled "Miscegenation By Music" asserts that "soul music" is a white and black musical form merged together. Goldman wrote:

What brought great soul performers like James Brown, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin and Otis Redding to the form was the public taste for authentic Negro styles fostered by white rock-'n'-roll groups like the Beatles and The Rolling Stones.³⁹

Without further argument, it seems quite obvious that the conclusion drawn by Mr. Goldman is in direct conflict with available information on the subject. What is referred to as "soul music" has always been in the fore to the black community. If Mr. Goldman were defining "public taste" as the taste of the white public, his historical sense of when the white public embraced "soul music" is incorrect. That is to say that long before the Beatles or The Rolling Stones, two groups that are hardly considered as soul groups by the black community, were co-opting black music--Elvis Presley, The Everly Brothers, and others were co-opting black musical forms. Haki, perceiving this trend

³⁸ Don L. Lee, Don't Cry, Scream, p. 48.

³⁹ Holiday, December, 1974, p. 75.

presented by Mr. Goldman's article, challenged it in his poetry. More important than the challenge to the white false claims to black music is that the themes help legitimize and support black culture.

The poem, "Don't Cry, Scream," is considered by many black literary critics as one of the greatest affirmations of black culture in poetry. Stephen Henderson wrote this about writers attempting to write about John Coltrane after Haki's famous poem, ". . . anyone reading or writing a Coltrane poem after 'Don't Cry, Scream' has the achievement of Lee to contend with."⁴⁰ This poem, in addition to applauding Coltrane for the creation of a new black jazz style, also criticizes the blues as an incorrect response to social oppression. Haki wrote, "I cry for billy holiday the blues, we aint blue . . . (all the blues did was make me cry)."⁴¹ The music of Coltrane was described as a "scream." The scream was the releasing of subconscious black emotion that was meant to symbolize a demand for freedom and liberation.

The train is the central symbol around which the myth is built. The word train is played upon and it has two meanings: (1) the image of a powerful locomotive, (2) the image of the man John Coltrane. The connotation of the image suggests power and strength like a powerful moving train, and innovation like the new jazz style of John Coltrane. The sound of a train whistle is meant to warn pedestrians and automobile drivers of an emerging train, and the sound of Coltrane's music is meant to warn America of an emerging new black man. Haki wrote, "Coltrane gone on a trip/he left blacks who were submerged in the values of the

⁴⁰ Stephen Henderson, Understand the New Black Poetry, p. 57.

⁴¹ Don L. Lee, Don't Cry, Scream, p. 28.

Euro-American society. It destroyed their false myths and assumptions. The poet wrote this about Coltrane's music, "driving some away, (those paper readers who thought manhood was something innate)."

The blond in the poem symbolizes the values of Euro-American society:

blonds had more fun-
with snagga--tooth niggers
. . . be-bop-en to James Brown's
cold sweat--these niggers didn't sweat
they perspired. & the blond's dye came out
I ran. she did too, with his . . . mind.

(All the quotes above came out
Don't Cry, Scream, pp. 27-31)

She also symbolized the Euro-American pattern of attempting to lure blacks away from their own culture values. Once black people were lured away from their culture, Euro-American society robbed them of the best of their culture and left them alone to hate themselves because of their cultural estrangement. Haki transcribes aesthetically the reality of the above; and writes in the same poem, "I ran, she did too, with his pennies, pop bottles & his mind/tune in next week . . . for anti-self in one lesson."

The poem continues with a heavy criticism of blacks who are culturally estranged. He wrote that "they were too busy getting into debt, expressing humanity & taking off color." The blacks estranged from black culture are working toward intergration which is the opposite of the goal of Black Nationalism. He referred to them as "Negro cow-sissies" and he said that they lived in "split-level homes & had split-level minds & babies." Haki states that those blacks are ashamed of black culture and that they instantly hated John Coltrane. The hate for Coltrane stemmed from their feeling threatened by the Black

Nationalist values created by Coltrane's music. Those values were a result of Coltrane's being in touch with the culture from which they were estranged. Haki writes that the music of Coltrane:

Screammm/ we-eeeeee/screech/teeee	improvise
ahheeeeeeeee/Screeeeeeee/scrEE	with
EEEE	feeling

The scream was an unequivocal demand.

The poem concludes with the persona having grown in moral depth and political consciousness. That growth makes possible the retractions of an earlier statement about his envy for a blind man who had the ability to hear what he would never see. The persona states:

& that BLIND man
 i don't envy anymore
 i can see his hear
 & hear his heard through my pores⁴²

What the persona heard was truth, and because of the truth he was able to embrace it and give praise to the giver of it as "the Gods will too."

The growth in consciousness of the persona is symbolic of the growth that Haki feels must take place throughout the black community. That consciousness is at the base of any liberating ideology. Haki's goal for his Black Music themes is to bring about a political awareness through the affirmation of black culture. Haki affirms the culture by affirming the music of the musicians who reflect their culture. The culture is also affirmed when Haki criticizes blacks who turn away from black culture and embrace the Euro-American culture. After Haki affirms black culture he establishes a solid foundation upon which a Black Nationalist ideology can emerge. His veneration of black culturalists

⁴²All the quotes came from Don't Cry, Scream, pp. 27-31.

musicians, poets, historians, critics, evolve into new black myths and new black heroes. The result of this creation of new myths and heroes is the establishment of new positive black images. The establishment of the new positive black images allows for a greater political awareness because it is one's self-image that controls what one is capable of doing.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROPHET AND PRIEST

This chapter treats poems in which the voice of the persona speaks from the point of view of a priest or a prophet. In the context of this chapter the two voices are very close, and we will discuss them often in the same context. However, the prophet differs from the priest in his role of awaking and sustaining among his people a vision of their destiny set besides the criteria of their deepest values in the most fundamental though significant language of the folk. The vision is one of a new black nation, and new social order, and a new value system. The prophet is more important than other "word-men" or visionaries because he is a cultural stabilizer linking the past with the present, the present with the future, and the future with the infinite. The prophet is able to stabilize the culture because of his keen awareness of history. He is able to warn the people because of his foresight into the future. The prophet is an extension of his community; therefore, he speaks for the community, to the community, and about the community.

Sub-themes of the Prophet-Themes are the Instructor and the Visionary. The instructor sub-themes can best be defined as one which communicates prophetic instruction through the personified voices of a teacher or instructor. The instructions are sometimes warnings as to how the black community can avoid "pitfalls." The warnings often come in a form in which the persona criticizes groups or individuals within

the black community who are perceived as detrimental to it. At other times, the instructor deals solely with the teaching of the people's history and culture.

The Visionary sub-theme can best be defined as one which communicates the political vision of the prophet and at the same time attempts to inspire the black community to unite around the fundamental assumptions of the vision. The theme explores the prophet's perceptions of reality and attempts to establish those insights as the perceptions of the entire black community. The metaphor of the eye occurs repeatedly in this motif. Haki writes in the Book of Life, "A Man's world is in his eyes."⁴³ The understanding of the instructor and Visionary themes are basic to the understanding of the role and function of the prophet in this chapter.

The priest themes are similar to the prophet themes; however, they differ because the priest has an added obligation--the establishment of a value system for his community. His pronouncements are absolute and his goal is to relay to his community the relationship between virtuous living and political liberation. The value system the priest attempts to create is a black value system. The terms "cleanliness" and "righteousness" occur again in this theme. The terms refer to the virtuous way in which black people are to relate to one another. Though all of the themes have moral overtones, they are also meant to be political directions and economic attitudes. The value system the priest expounds is the Nguzo Saba or The Seven Principles (assembled by Maulana Karenga). Haki feels that a black value system is basic

⁴³Don L. Lee, Book of Life, p. 82.

to black liberation because one's value system is the basis of one's actions.

The Prophet and Priest themes are didactic. In other words, they entail systematic instructions, teachings, and moral lessons, intended to convey instruction and information to the black community; as well as pleasure and entertainment. This didacticism makes the themes political. Haki attempts to instruct blacks on the ways they might prepare themselves mentally, physically, and spiritually for political liberations. Ojeda Penn, a former graduate student at Atlanta University, wrote a paper entitled "Black Revolutionary Didacticism in The Poetry of Don Lee." In his study, Mr. Penn argues that Haki's poetry is intended to politicize and sensitize black people to cultural and political issues. He wrote:

It (Haki's poetry) illuminates and reflects the unique beauty of the Black Experience, while fusing it with the motion of survival ethics, which teaches black people identity, purpose and direction. Finally it legitimizes the reality of black people.⁴⁴

Many of the prophetic themes, warnings to the black community, are criticisms of the negative qualities of individuals or groups within the black community. Most of the criticized individuals usually possess values that are contradictory to Haki's Black Nationalist values--Sammy Davis, Jr., Diana Ross, Roy Wilkins, the cool-niggers, modern black poets, and the black bourgeoisie. These individuals are metaphors symbolizing the value system of their particular groups aspirations. Haki's criticism of these individuals is a warning of the intrinsic danger in their value system. The danger awaiting those who refuse to

⁴⁴(Unpublished Master's Thesis, Atlanta University, August, 1971), p. 3.

accept a black value system is a mythological descendance into a state of existence called "living death." The state of a "living death" leads inevitably to physical, mental and spiritual death.

In "See Sammy Run in the Wrong Direction," Haki writes about the "living death" that characterizes Sammy Davis, Jr.'s life style:

even at the death moment he tried to steal
the new song
afterall
he was just a jewish boy
who happened to be negro
the death moment coming, the wall
. . . but the goodeye saw
the realdeath the certaindeath

(We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 62)

This death falls upon blacks who refuse to accept their blackness; who refuse to use their blackness as a means of black liberation. Haki concludes the same poem: "he fails to do an impression of a black man." This failure will ultimately lead to the death of blacks who try to deny their blackness.

Haki also uses the prophet to identify traitors and opportunists in the black community. To him, the most serious traitors in the community are the poets. He writes that "when you can't trust the poet, who is left?"⁴⁵ The poets who were once in the forefront of the black liberation movement have now become "comfortable and published." In the poem, "history of the Poet as a Whore," Haki implies that some poets' goals were to use the blackness as a means of becoming famous. He wrote about those poets, who "had a notion that he/she wd be a famous yesterday."⁴⁶

⁴⁵Don L. Lee, Book of Life, p. 11.

⁴⁶Don L. Lee, "History of the Poet as a Whore," in Don't Cry, Scream, p. 40.

In "We Are Some Funny 'Black Artists' and Everybody Laughs at Us," Haki concludes that the fame many black writers were seeking they never received because they were merely being used for financial gain by the white power structure. They were taken advantage of financially because 'militant black writers' who write real-bad about white people can't even get a current accounting of their royalties from random house or double day and black nation-building never crossed their minds."⁴⁷

Diana Ross is criticized by Haki for being a traitor, as well as insensitive and forgetful. She is insensitive to the realities of poverty. She is said to have forgotten her people and her culture, both of whom were directly responsible for her success as an entertainer. Haki writes, "only the well fed forget."⁴⁸ The fame that the black writers were seeking from the white power structure and did not receive, Diana Ross did receive. He refers to her in his poetry as a "real animal of this earth," a "little supreme," a "skinny earthling," and a "symbol of a new aberration."⁴⁹

The cool-nigger is another vilified individual in the black community. He is reviled for the same reasons that the black stars and writers are criticized. His "living death" is his allusion that material things in a capitalist society can bring him freedom and liberation. The "cool-nigger" is dangerous to the black community because he is also an

⁴⁷Don L. Lee, Book of Life, p. 19.

⁴⁸Don L. Lee, "On Seeing Diana Go Madding" in We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 38.

⁴⁹Ibid.

image setter. When blacks are denied access to materialism (that is to say that they own relatively little property and virtually no means of production), what little materialism in the form of products and commodities that whites make available to them only helps to foster a false allusion of pride and progress. Haki feels authentic pride and progress never resides in material things, but in a man's spiritual value system. He wrote that this spirituality is reflected in a man's eyes-- "do not look at his possessions or non-possessions . . . look into his eyes."⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the "cool-nigger" is often searching for meaning in material possessions. His materialistic nature is reflected in the way he dresses--"blue gym shoes, tailor made bell bottoms, and a red and pink scarf."⁵¹ "But He Was Cool," indicates that the "cool-nigger" also has a taste for African garb. Haki writes:

his dashikis were tailor made
 & his beads were imported sea shells
 . . . his tikis were hand carved
 out of ivory

(Don't Cry, Scream, p. 24)

The cool-nigger was described in the introduction of We Walk The Way Of The New World as an "international nigger" who wore Indian bands, gold ear-rings, scarfs or tikis around his neck, white bell bottoms, brown buckled cowboy boots and a "fur coat . . . looking like it could bite." The detailed description of the "cool-nigger" as a enemy who must be destroyed before the black community can progress. He, like the black

⁵⁰Don L. Lee, Book of Life, p. 82.

⁵¹Don L. Lee, "Move Un-noticed to be Noticed: A Nationhood Poem," in We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 69.

poet is a traitor. Like Diana Ross, he, too, longs to forget his reality. Because of his non-acceptance by the white community, he is forced to stay and interact with his community.

The last group of blacks who the prophet criticizes are the black bourgeoisie. This group is portrayed as the black community's enemy because they are economically better off than the majority of blacks and they refuse to utilize their skills for the betterment of their people. In other words, part of the way Haki assesses this group is his taking into consideration their tremendous potentiality. That potentiality is measured against what they actually choose to do with it. This group is depicted as a self-interest group, and any movement by or within the group is toward integration and assimilation. These values are contradictory to Black Nationalist values and, therefore, detrimental to black liberation.

This attack upon the black bourgeoisie has been the most persistent attack in Haki's poetry. It can be found as early as his first book, Think Black, where much of the poetry is autobiographical. Such a poem as "Black Again, Home" outlines Haki's personal growth and awareness in terms of his leaving a job as a young executive to work full-time for a black people. "Understanding but not forgetting" is a poem that points out major contradictions in American society, as well as the contradictions in the black community. "Pains/with a Light Touch" is accompanied by a parenthetical statement that reads: "for my middle class friends with their split-level homes and lives."⁵² The poem attacks the intelligence of the black middle class.

⁵²Don L. Lee, Black Pride, p. 14.

Haki feels that all blacks who refuse to accept a black value system are traitors. The black poets were traitors because they sought prestige. The entertainers were traitors because they desired to be assimilated into Euro-American society. The "cool-nigger" was a traitor because he refused to deal with a black value system, but instead chose to live a life of fantasy and illusion. The black bourgeoisie, according to Haki, betrays their people for the love and pursuit of money. He writes in the Book of Life, "they will spend their days making money spend their evenings thinking about what to buy. . . ."⁵³ Haki's belief is that blacks should spend their time working for a black nation and not for wealth and materialism.

After the prophet criticizes the community, his next step is to give the community constructive instructions. "A poem to compliment other poems" is an example of these instructions. This poem simply instructs blacks to "change." The change is a total change from an "instant yes machine" into a "necessary blackself."⁵⁴ The poem repeats the word "change" and the repetition gives emphasis to the word. The repetition also gives the poem a rhythm which makes the poem adaptable for oral interpretation. A poem that lends itself to oral interpretation is important because the black tradition has been more of an oral one than a written one.

"Move Un-noticed to be Noticed: A Nationhood Poem" utilizes repetition and rhythm for the same effect as the previous poem. The message shifts slightly from "change your mind nigger" to "move, into

⁵³ Don L. Lee, Book of Life, p. 47.

⁵⁴ Don L. Lee, Don't Cry, Scream, p. 37.

our own." "Own" is defined as a "natural extension of oneself," one's culture. It is said to be something that the black man rightfully owns, something that cannot be "bought or sold." The poem concludes with the instructor teaching black people to be like a "black hurricane that moves."⁵⁵ The instructions are for blacks to move, to accept their culture, to understand the political significance of black culture.

"Mwilu/ or Poem for the Living" is another example of prophetic instructions. It begins with the persona instructing black people to rechannel the energy they give to the Euro-American society toward making the black community a viable place to live. The instructions continue and the conclusion is that the black man must be other than a common man. Haki writes, "be other than the common build the sky. . . ." As the poem continues, the voice of the instructor transforms into the voice of a priest and the priest adds a moral dimension to the prophet's instructions. This addition is evident in lines like "bestrange in the righteous," "rake cleanliness brother" and "reflect the goodness of yr man."⁵⁶ Haki's technique of alternating voices within a poem is an attempt to show the relationship between the black political and black spiritual reality.

"Positive Movement will be Difficult but Necessary" blends the voice of the instructor with the voice of the priest; but in a more

⁵⁵Don L. Lee, We Walk the Way of the New World, pp. 66-70. (All of the quotes in paragraph came from same source.)

⁵⁶Don L. Lee, Direction Score (Detroit; Broadside Press, 1971), p. 208.

subtle way than the poem discussed above. The moral message here is that through hard work there is hope for a better tomorrow. Some have said that the idea that "hard work is rewarding" has occurred before in Euro-American literature; that it was part of the puritanical and Horatio Algerian myth of "luck, pluck and virtue." In an exclusive taped interview, I asked Haki to explain the central difference between his theme and the older European theme. Haki's response was that "the origin of the myth was not Euro-American but African."⁵⁷ Though the puritans and other individuals or groups in American history utilized the myth for their own means, that did not alter the origin or the validity of the myth.

Haki's new myth has no religious connotation. The issues at stake are survival or death, and neither one has anything to do with a supreme being or god. Blacks are instructed to live a life because living that way supposedly guarantees their survival as a people. There is no appeal to fear or to the anti-rational faculties in man; the appeal is logical. The appeal to black people is evident when the persona asks such questions as:

can you change the direction of the fog with money?
 can you beat the death makers with money?
 can you be respected as a man with money?
 can you beat yr momm's rapist with money?

(Book of Life, p. 16)

The poem is also effective in its ability to inspire the black community. The inspiration is reminiscent of the inspiration a coach gives an athlete. Haki draws from the world of athletics for his central

⁵⁷Taped Interview with Don L. Lee, July 27, 1974, Chicago, Illinois.

metaphor, the fighter. Muhammad Ali was the athletic figure who helped inform the metaphor. The myth builds around Ali's vigorous training for his up-coming fight, which included chopping down trees. Haki writes, "fighters fight that is what they do come on champ chop chop hit hard hit harda/ catch up box yourself into meaningness/ fighters fight while others watch." The poem continues with an enumeration of difficult things that must be done in order for blacks to achieve their ultimate liberation. Some of those difficult tasks include studying black history and volunteering one's services to community projects. Haki writes, "observe Bobo studying the history of the race it is difficult but necessary" and "check Willa Mae giving time to the community school it is difficult but necessary."⁵⁸ The poem concludes with the prophet informing the black community that the positive movement on their part will be different from the movement of the Western world, but that their movement will be necessary for the achieving of their ultimate freedom.

The last poem discussed in this chapter is "We Walk the Way of the New World." Other possibilities are "Rise Vision comin," "Wake-up Niggers," "A Poem for Negro Intellectuals," "To Be Quicker for Black Political Prisoners on the Inside & Outside," "Positives: for Sterling Plumpp," "For Black People," and "Blackman/ an unfinished history." However, the discussion of these would not render any new information. "We Walk the Way of the New World" differs from the others in that it represents a tone that has come to be known as the "positive approach."

⁵⁸Don L. Lee, Book of Life, pp. 14-18. (All quotes in paragraph came from the same source).

While it is generally true that modern black poetry is largely characterized by its use of the "positive approach," Haki's poetry excels the others. The "positive approach" is usually characterized by these three generalizations: (1) the content is addressed solely to the black community, (2) the content of the theme is solely about the black community, (3) the prophet/priest's vision of what should be is fused with the reality of what is.

Prior to the Black Arts movement, very little poetry was written directly to the black community. There was poetry written about the black community, but little was written solely with its interests in mind. Many of the themes were about the hardship of racism and segregation, but few emphasized that positive qualities could be used as a means toward black liberation. Concentrating on one's strength has always been more productive in the long run than dwelling on one's weaknesses.

Haki does this in "We Walk the Way of the New World" by merging the moral vision of the priest with the positive qualities within the black community. The result is a new mythology of black people living out Black Nationalist values and working toward the building of a Black Nation:

our dreams are realities
traveling the nature-way
we meet them
at the apex of their utmost
meanings/means;
we walk in cleanliness

(We Walk The Way of The New World, p. 65.)

The poem concludes with the prophet predicting the future and destiny of his people--"we walk in cleanliness of newness of it all."

Haki uses a literary technique of changing persona voices in the

poem. He changes from the voice of the prophet to the voice of the priest. The prophet sees that the community, as a people, keep abreast of their political destiny, while the priest assures that the community live according to a black value-system:

We'll become owners of the New World
 . . . will run it as unowners
 for
 we will live in it too
 & will want to be remembered
 as realpeople

(We Walk the Way of the New World, p. 65)

The conclusion projects the moral vision of the priest and the political vision of the prophet. These are merged into a new black myth that communicates what the new order of living will be like after black people inherit the "New World."

This chapter has attempted to identify those poems that fall roughly into two broad thematic clusters, namely, the Prophet and the Priest. A fine line between the two categories distinguishes the prophet as one showing concern for the political destiny of the black community from the priest as one showing concern for the moral destiny of the black community. We have also attempted to suggest that another possible division of the Prophet themes could result in two sub-categories, namely the Instructor and the Visionary sub-themes. These changing voices of the persona can occur within the same poem, in the same context. The overall goal of using this technique was to show the relationship between moral vision and political liberation. Haki's use of the "positive approach" was also discussed in this chapter. This affirms the black community and motivates them by emphasizing their strengths.

The prophet and the priest foresee the future and interpret the past. Their vision of reality is not always the same as the black community's vision of reality. When the two visions (prophet and priest) concur, the themes evolve into a new myth. We called them myths because much of the concern of the themes is for what ought to be, in lieu of what is. The creation of the new myths are political in as much as they give the black community new political and moral visions and new black images.

CHAPTER V

PAN-AFRICA

Each theme discussed thus far in this study has communicated a strong need for black unification. Black unity is the basis for Black Nationalism. The highest expression of Black Nationalism is Pan-Africanism. Its premise is that black people of African descent throughout the globe constitute a common cultural and political community by virtue of their origin in Africa and their common racial, social and economic oppression. It further maintains that political, economic, and cultural unity is essential among all Africans, to being about effective action for the liberation and progress of the African peoples and nations. Haki has defined Pan-Africanism in this way:

one, whole, entire and of course
Africa, so one Africa or an African
People moving toward oneness . . . It's
really about land. . . . ⁵⁹

This chapter reflects this theme in the poetry of Haki R. Madhubuti.

Pan-Africanism unlike Negritude is not an historical nor aesthetic movement. In the context of this study it is defined as a political awareness; an acceptance of the fact that peoples of African descent, wherever they might be are an African people. It means further that black people wherever they exist will never be free until the continent of Africa is free; free from colonialism and

⁵⁹Interview: Don L. Lee, "The World of Don L. Lee," The Black Collegian, p. 33.

neo-colonialism; free to control its mean of production, and free to control its natural resources. Haki wrote, "We can't talk about being free here or anywhere else in the world if we're an African people without Africa being free."⁶⁰

In terms of what Haki does with this concept in his poetry, one may describe or discuss his ideas in the following broad critical categories: (1) Poems that make casual and generalized reference to African images, symbols, languages, and geograph, (2) Poems that use African words or concepts as poem titles; (3) Poems that discuss contemporary problems in Africa; (4) Poems that are dedicated to African personalities; (5) Poems that discuss the Third-World.

Many poems making casual and generalized references to Africa do so for the purpose of legitimizing Africa. Often the reference made to Africa is purely a geographical comparison between blackness and Africa as in "Marylana" and "Judy-One." In "Marylana" the beauty of the black women is compared to "drops of Algerian sand."⁶¹ The intent of the comparison is to legitimize the beauty of the black woman and also to legitimize the beauty of Africa as a "homeland" for all blacks. "The metaphor "Algerian sand" is important. Algeria is in North Africa and until 1962 was under French control. Because France controlled Algeria for a long period, Algeria has always seemed more French than African. Haki's use of the Algerian sand as an African metaphor helps support the Pan-African belief that Africa is one country. "Judy-One"

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Don L. Lee, We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 30.

utilizes the same technique but uses another North African metaphor-- "Mediterranean Sea." In this poem the black women's smile is compared to "clear light bouncing off the darkness of the Mediterranean at night time."⁶²

"To be Quicker for Black Political Prisoners on the inside & outside--real" and "An Afterward: For Gwen Brooks" make casual references to African images. In these poems African images are mixed with images from Afro-American culture; the result is a merging of the two images into a new image. Haki does this to symbolize the oneness of the African and Afro-American destiny. The image in "To Be Quicker for Black Political Prisoners . . ." is that of quick "black-African-fist slapping a wop-dope pusher's momma."⁶³ That image was used to describe the pace in which people of African descent must move in order to bring back the goodness of their past. "An Afterward: for Gwen Brooks" describes her personality as " . . . smiles in African-rain." That description of her personality later in the poem is said to be a "pleasure well received among uncollected garbage cans and heatless basement apartments."⁶⁴ Thus, Haki has mixed metaphors and images and formed new images.

Several of Haki's poems do not talk specifically about Africa, but they utilize African titles. One is "African Men," a poem that

⁶²Ibid., p. 27.

⁶³Don L. Lee, Direction Score, p. 202.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 205.

venerates the "wisdom" and "stillness" of Hoyt W. Fuller and Lerone Bennett, Jr. They are said to be men who "set the vision and keep it" and "view the world and warn us."⁶⁵ (They were discussed as new black heroes in chapter three.) "Mwilu/or Poem for the Living" is another poem using an African word for a title. The word "Mwilu" means in the Swahili language "of blacks or likes blacks." Prescriptive and through the voice of the instructor, the poem prescribes a particular way of life that people of African descent are to follow:

read like u eat only betta Musemi
 Musemi be yr name run emptiness into its givers
 & collect the rays of wisdom
 . . . yr wind is Chicago-big, Kitheka: African
 forest right-wind.

(Direction Score, p. 206)

Besides having this African word in its title, the poem also attempts to legitimize Africa in its use of other African words such as "Musemi," meaning scholar or one who reads; and "Kitheka," meaning wanderer of the forest. The poem concludes with the voice of the priest instructing the people of African descent on the proper spiritual behavior:

kiss each other end
 touch the feel of secret words
 while we walk the
 shadows of greatness

Most of Haki's Pan-African themes aid in the construction and creation of new black myths. Some poems, however, are a discussion of contemporary problems in Africa. In one, "Change is Not Always Progress," the contemporary problems discussed is that of urbanization and

⁶⁵Don L. Lee, Book of Life, p. 26.

industrialization. Haki writes:

don't let them
steel
your body as to put
100 stories of concrete on you
so that you
 arrogantly
scrape
the
sky

(We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 45)

However, Haki does not fear urbanization or industrialization; in fact, he understands both to be vital to modern growth and prosperity. What he does fear is that Euro-American imperialists who encourage industrialization in Africa do so for the purpose of monopolizing and controlling Africa's means of production. For that reason he begins, "Africa don't let them steal your face." The "them" in the stanza is a direct reference to the Euro-American capitalist and imperialist. Haki plays upon the word "steel." In the opening stanza it means, don't let the imperialists exploit you; in the last stanza it means, don't let them build tall sky scraping buildings in Africa. The function of the play upon words, as well as the functions of the poem is to venerate the actual beauty of Africa and discredit the accomplishments of the Western world. The poem accuses the West of having exploited underdeveloped countries in the process of obtaining their accomplishments. Haki feels that the Euro-Americans who exploit Africa are the same Euro-Americans who exploit blacks in America. Thus, this poem helps reinforce another Pan-African assumption: all black people of African descent have one common enemy--the European or Euro-American white man.

This same theme of European imperialism is expressed in "Rise Vision Comin: May 27, 1972." The author compares Roy Wilkins of the

NAACP and the Euro-American industrialist. Haki begins the comparison asserting "send roy wilkins to Africa if he don't act Afrikan." He establishes Wilkins as an extended metaphor symbolizing the empty rhetoric of the sixties:

think him Gulf Oil, IBM or GM the way he talk about
industrializing
Afrika . . . /
think him Dow Chemical or the Pentagon the way he talk
about arming
Afrika /
but we goin a need mo than wine bottles, promises &
ray gun dream

(Book Of Life, p. 22)

Haki concludes by venerating several Afrika Liberation movements and leaders, such as FRELIMO, SWAPO, FROLIZI, PAIGC, Patricia Lumumba, Sekou Toure, and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Following the veneration of this group the poet, as visionary, utilizes the "positive approach" and prophesies the future: "we coming shine fighting thru spacesun . . . comin nationalists comin christians comin muslims comin Pan-Afrikanists ancient black spirit comin comin."⁶⁶ The prophecy of the future is the unity of all the above groups.

The fourth category under the heading of Pan-Afrikan themes is the dedication of particular poems to Afrikan personalities. This need not be discussed in detail because many of the poems already cited throughout this study were dedicated to African personalities. We can list the African personalities to whom dedications were given and make brief additional remarks about the nature of their themes.

"Nigerian Unity or little niggers killing little niggers" is

⁶⁶Don L. Lee, Book of Life, p. 24.

dedicated to Christopher Okigbo and Wole Soyinka, two Nigerian writers. The theme is that Nigeria must be unified in order to survive. Soyinka and Okigbo are criticized for having acquired "strings" on their minds as Haki focuses on Nigerian issues which prevent the country's unification. The poem concludes by asking a pointed question, "Suppose those who made wars had to fight you?"⁶⁷

"Rise Vision Comin: May 27, 1972" is dedicated to Kwame Nkrumah, who is the late ex-president of Ghana. Here the theme of Pan-Afrikan unity is vivid. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who at one time envisioned a "united states of Africa," was extremely important in the development of Pan-African thought and ideology.

Two other African personalities to whom Haki dedicated poetry were Amilcar Cabral, the assassinated leader of a PAIGC; and Mahmood Darweesh, an Algerian revolutionary poet. "A Poem of a Poet," to Darweesh, demonstrates a mastery in technique as he compares and contrasts the culture of Africa with the culture of the Western world. "Spirit flight into the Coming," dedicated to Cabral, also honors Imamu Baraka and the Congress of Afrikan People. This poem like most of those in this chapter promulgates the Pan-Afrikan ideology and attempts to affirm African tradition and culture.

The last category of Haki's Pan-African poetry concerns the Third World. Many Pan-Africanists would argue that many Third World countries cannot be included under a Pan-African view; however, their differences in thought seems to be largely one of semantics. Haki

⁶⁷Don L. Lee, Don't Cry, Scream, p. 47.

does not define Third World in any of his prose or expository writing. Nonetheless, in the naming of his press, "Third World Press," and in his inclusion of "Red" and "Yellow" people in his discussion of who will inherit the earth, one can infer that his belief is that all people of color originated from Africa. If this is true, then the Pan-African world must be broad enough to include the entire world of peoples of color.

More support for the above premise can be seen in his speaking about the Indians, the Asians, and the Africans in the same context. In his essay, "The Death Walk Against Africa," he writes:

There are no Afrikans, Asians or Indians
in Europe ruling European people (white/people).
. . . There are no real men, Black man or
Yellow men ruling America.⁶⁸

Imamu Amiri Baraka supports Haki's view. In his essay, "The Need for a Cultural Base to Civil Rites & Bpower Movements," Baraka defines Black Power as the actual majority of the world's colored people. He wrote, "Black Power. Power of the majority is what is meant. The actual majority in the world of colored people."⁶⁹ Based on these definitions and others, a generalized definition of the Third World for the purpose of this chapter is the following: all the world's people of color from under-developed countries who remain subject to foreign rule and domination. These countries are largely India, Asia, and Africa.

⁶⁸Black World, XXII, No. 12 (October, 1973), p. 29.

⁶⁹Raise Race Rays Raze (New York: Vintage, 1972), p. 40.

The poet's themes about the Third World are found in his earliest poetry. While the themes did not indicate an in-depth awareness of the Third World, the seeds were planted for his greater awareness in the future. Some of the early poems like "Understanding But Not Forgetting" indicated some Third World awareness in as little as the parenthetical statement that followed the title, "(for the Non-Colored of the World)." The poem essentially denounces Americanism and calls for unity among all colored people.

"The long Reality" is another Third World poem. It is the poet's personal recounting of the meaning of the Vietnam war and its relationship to the black experience. "Message To A Black Soldier" discusses the same theme as "The Long Reality," but its tone is sharper and more penetrating. The last line of the poem is the voice of a Viet Cong after he had just been shot by a black soldier, "we are both niggers-- WHY?"⁷⁰

"No More Marching," denouncing demonstrating and marching as viable tactics toward black liberation, also reflects a Third World consciousness in the lines, "world war 3/ussr, england, france 7 usa/vs. third world."⁷¹ Those lines predict that the next world war will be fought along the color line. The assertion of a race is the fundamental contradiction in the world also supports the Pan-African ideological position on the subject. This assertion emphasizes the necessity of unity along racial lines and challenges the Marxist class analysis.

⁷⁰Don L. Lee, Think Black, p. 22.

⁷¹Don L. Lee, Black Pride, p. 34.

"The Third World Bond" is not actually about the Third World; however, it does denounce black men who use the Third World issue as an excuse to obtain women from Third World countries. The poem also criticizes black men for their insensitivity to the black woman's needs. Haki writes: "the revolutionists, made bonds with the 3rd world thru Chinese women, the sisters waited, (& wondered when the revolution would start)."72

The last poem discussed under the Third World heading is "For Black People." This, as the author states in a parenthetical statement following the title, is "a poetic statement on black existence in america with a view of tomorrow." Part-one, "In the Beginning," is a mythological recounting of the Afro-American experience. Part-two, "Transition and Middle Passage" describes the actual transformation and battle in which black people emerged victorious. "The End is The Real World," part-three, describes the new order created by blacks--the vision of the survivors is the vision of the Third World:

there were black communities,
red communities, yellow /
communities . . . there was not
a need for gun control. /
there was not need for the word peace for its
antonym had been removed from the vocabulary
like i sd befo
the end is the real world

(We Walk The Way Of The New World, p. 60)

This chapter has been an attempt to categorize Haki's Pan-African themes. Five were suggested: (1) poems that make casual and generalized reference to African images, symbols, languages, and

⁷²Don L. Lee, Don't Cry, Scream, p. 56.

geography; (2) poems that use African words or concepts as poem titles; (3) poems that discuss contemporary problems in Africa; (4) poems that are dedicated to African personalities; (5) poems that discuss the Third World. The function of these themes was to develop a Pan-African consciousness. This awareness is manifested in Pan-African ideology which has as its premise the idea that black people of African descent throughout the globe constitute a common cultural and political community.

These Pan-African themes must further be viewed as the goal or conclusion to all the other themes. The earliest themes of the Black Woman has as their base black female and male unity. That unity was tantamount to the creation of strong black families, the basis of any nation. Black Nationalism, an objective of Pan-Africanism, is imperative to the strength or power of any country.

The next thematic division was the "Creation of New Black Myth/Heroes." This chapter supported Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism because at the base of any culture's growth and expansion is its people's awareness of the underlying myths and heroes of the culture. The hero is an extension of the community, the recreation of the community's realities on a larger-than-life scale. The myths in the end are all political, because the hero becomes a new black image for the community. Controlling one's image is important; thus, Haki concluded that the image controls what one is capable of doing and how one perceives oneself in light of one's oppressor.

The Prophet and Priest themes represented the fire and the spirit behind the newly created myths and images. Those themes reflected the moral and political vision of the author and the forces that helped

shape those visions. Those themes were the most revolutionary because even as they were highly sensitive to the social situations in which they were produced, they also sought to soar to cosmic heights. They always attempted to transcend the immediate and link-up with the future in such a way that made time seem irrelevant and only space or the lack of it important. Those themes appealed not simply to black people's emotions, but to their higher selves as well.

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